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STATE FOR CMS, SES/O, DS/IP/WHA, DS/IP/SPC FOR JIM SPOO, WHA/CAR  
(KHARNE/JTILGHMAN), USSOUTHCOM FOR BILL VANCIO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OAS](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PARTICIPATES IN OAS OBSERVER  
MISSION

Summary

1. On September 3, 2007, National General Elections were held in Jamaica. The Organization of American States (OAS) was present at the invitation of the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) to serve as impartial observers for the electoral process. OAS fielded 38 volunteers in two-person teams and covered 53 of 60 electoral districts in Jamaica. Six Emboffs participated in the observation mission. End Summary.

Pre-Election training

2. While OAS leadership communicated with AmEmbassy Kingston well in advance of the planned mission, the training for volunteers was held on Saturday, September 1, two days prior to the election. Volunteers were briefed by OAS Chief of Mission, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, other OAS staff members and Director of Elections Danville Walker. Ambassador Ramdin thanked the governments of the United States and Canada for providing the funding for the OAS mission to Jamaica at the beginning of the training session. All volunteers were given maps, a list of voting stations in their assigned areas, along with election training materials, and vests and hats identifying them as OAS observers. The Election Organization of Jamaica (EOJ) provided photo identification cards for all participants as well.

3. The 38 volunteer observers represented 15 nationalities, and were comprised of three different groups, members of the diplomatic community, OAS members from off-island, and foreign national faculty members of the University of the West Indies, Mona campus (UWI). Teams were each assigned one or two electoral districts to cover during their day-long observation mission. The three U.S. Embassy teams were all given districts in St. Andrew Parish, encompassing Kingston and the surrounding area, including the polling stations for residents living near the New Embassy Compound (NEC).

Early start for monitoring teams

4. Since polling stations opened for voting at 7:00 am local time (8:00 am EDT), all observer teams arrived at one selected polling station by 6:30 am local time on Monday, September 3. Observers were given specific forms to assist in documenting the voting process, and special notes were taken for the opening procedures. Each voting station was comprised of two temporary workers representing the EOJ, one presiding officer and one clerk. Each candidate for parliament is authorized to have one authorized agent in place at each polling station to observe on behalf of the party. These agents were given copies of the voter list for the polling station and allowed to observe the instructing of voters and casting

of ballots, as well as staying for the close of the polling station to observe the preliminary counting of votes. (Note: while all voting stations visited by Emboffs had representatives of both major political parties, other observers noted an absence of members of one party in traditional strongholds or garrison communities that tend to support one party exclusively. While there were independent candidates and at least one other small party represented in the election in some constituencies, none of the Emboffs observed any agents to represent these minority candidates at the polling stations. One OAS team observed a polling station that opened late for voting due to the late arrival of the People's National Party agent. End Note.)

15. The Observer teams were given a complete list of all possible voting stations, and suggested to visit as many locations as possible for short observations. (Note: some large polling centers had as many as 20 polling stations at one central location, such as a church or school. At the large locations, often different rooms were marked and set-up for the different voting stations. End Note.) All locations visited had a strong security presence, most locations had more than one police officer as well as temporary-hire security guards, and some locations had armed soldiers from the Jamaican Defense Force (JDF) present. Agents from the major political parties were allowed to wear their traditional colors, orange for People's National Party (PNP) and green for the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP), but forbidden from wearing any likeness of candidates or logos of the parties. Many locations had a strong presence of both green and orange shirts near the front gate of the polling stations, but no aggressive behavior or violence was observed by the OAS volunteers. (Note: each party was authorized to have outdoor agents at each polling center to assist voters in finding the proper voting location. However, in practice it was difficult to distinguish between outdoor agents and extra party supporters in the large groups of green and orange shirts. End

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Note.)

16. Observer teams covered as many locations and polling stations as possible during the voting hours of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm local time, and were instructed to witness the closing procedures of one polling station and monitor the initial counting of ballots cast. (Note: due to reporting requirements and other official duties the team headed by Poloff was only able to monitor from 6:30 am to 1:00 pm local time and not able to monitor the closing and initial counting procedures. Overall the three Emboff teams visited over 20 polling centers and over 100 polling stations during the voting activities. End Note.)

Free and fair elections

17. Overall the EOJ staff members, most of whom were temporary hires, conducted their jobs efficiently, professionally, and carefully. Most polling stations opened within 15 minutes of the goal-time of 7:00 am, and all late openings were for legitimate reasons such as incomplete polling materials. Voters were allowed to enter the polling stations one at-a-time. Voters possessing a voter registration photo id card were checked off the list, and shown their ballots, instructed impartially on how and where to mark and fold their ballots. Potential voters without their voter identification cards were verified in the voter registration, challenged with questions about their address and biographical information and then a sworn affidavit, complete with fingerprints was completed and signed by the presiding officer and the voter. The actual voting booths were cardboard lecterns with flaps on the sides to provide enough privacy to vote without the workers seeing which candidate was chosen. (Note: as Jamaica uses the parliamentary system, each voter only chooses one candidate for their home district Member of Parliament. End Note.)

18. Minor glitches were seen in a few instances, but mostly voters patiently waited in line to cast their votes and were able to depart after dipping their right index fingers in ink to mark the completion of the voting process. Emboffs observed a few people who had difficulty finding the proper polling station to cast their

votes, and one instance of a woman with a valid voter id card being told someone had already cast a vote using her name, but with the assistance of the supervisor of the polling center was eventually allowed to cast her vote.

19. At their final press conference on September 4, Ambassador Ramdin pronounced the elections "free and fair." Embodys who participated concurred with the OAS assessment, finding that while a few minor incidents may have occurred, overall the voting was well organized by EOJ and the elections were conducted in a smooth and transparent manner.

JOHNSON